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17. JUNGLE BABBLER *TURDOIDES STRIATUS* FEEDING ON
GARDEN LIZARD *CALOTES VERSICOLOR*

On 12 March 1991 at 1030 h in the Gujarat Agricultural University, Campus, Anand, Gujarat, we saw a Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striatus* (Jerdon) flying low between trees with a dead Garden Lizard *Calotes versicolor* (Daudin) in its bill. The abdominal region of the lizard was already damaged and opened and the tail was missing. As the babbler landed on a tree, other flock mates also followed it and one of them could manage to snatch the prey away. This babbler did not go far but landed on the ground and took position near a tree trunk, protected on the sides by bushy growth of ornamental plants which prevented robbing attempts by conspecifics.

Once settled the babbler broke its unusually large prey into small pieces. It did not make any attempt to tear the prey by holding it between its bill and feet as large avian predators do. Instead

it pressed the lizard under its feet, and picked the lizard repeatedly and within 4 minutes the lizard was swallowed in small pieces.

The Jungle Babbler is omnivorous. Mason and Maxwell-Lefroy (1912) had found frogs in the gut of this species in Bihar. There exist only one earlier record of recovery of *Calotes* from the gut of the Jungle Babbler (1 out of 140 gut contents) by Andrews and Naik (1970). Toor and Saini (1986) have reported that Large Grey Babbler *T. malcolmi* also feeds on lizards in Punjab (2 out of 125 gut contents).

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18. SOME NOTES ON PIED GROUND THRUSH *ZOOTHERA WARDII* (BLYTH)

The Pied Ground Thrush *Zoothera wardii* is known to be a passage migrant in southern India according to Ali and Ripley (1987) and Karthikeyan (1992) and is known only from a few places in South India. It is known to winter in Sri Lanka.

This species was first seen in a very small shola amidst coffee plantation near Yercaud (11° 46' N, 78° 13' E) on 22 February 1992 when two males were seen. One of them was seen near a pool in the shola, while the other was seen flying up to a tree at the edge of the shola.

On 23 February 1992 a male was seen in the

coffee plantation rummaging amongst the litter and was almost buried amidst it. The Pied Ground Thrush chased a Whitethroated Ground Thrush *Zoothera citrina cyanotus* which was also foraging near by but tolerated the presence of the Spotted Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps* which was similarly occupied less than a foot away.

Two sightings of one female on each occasion on 22 February 1992 and 26 February 1992 could not be confirmed due to briefness of the sighting.

These sightings near Yercaud, Shevaroy hills further substantiate Krys Kazmierczak's (1991)

sighting of the species at Yercaud on 28 and 30 December 1990 which happens to be the first record of the species wintering in South India¹.

Later while on a visit to Kolli hills one male Pied Ground Thrush was seen on 8 March 1992. The individual was seen inside a shola which is quite disturbed and near Sholaikadu (11° 18' N, 78° 21' E). This happens to be the first record of the species for Kolli hills.

The three sightings, all of them being in February and March along with Kryz Kazmierczak's sighting in December suggest that

the species winters in Shevaroy and Kolli hills in South India.

The above observations were made during visits to Yercaud and Kolli hills as part of the Tree Shrew (*Anathana ellioti*) Project funded by World Wildlife Fund — US and coordinated by World Wide Fund for Nature — India (Tamil Nadu State Office).

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¹Reported from Pt. Calimere (JBNHS 87 (2): 301) — Editors.

19. A NOTE ON THE REPRODUCTIVE BIOLOGY OF THE SPOTTED POND TURTLE, *Geoclemys hamiltonii*

The spotted pond turtle, *Geoclemys hamiltonii* is a widely distributed hardshell species in Northern India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Das 1991, Colour Guide to the Turtles and Tortoises of the Indian Subcontinent). However, little is known about its biology. *Geoclemys hamiltonii* is common at a few localities in the flood plains of the river Brahmaputra such as Kaziranga National Park and Orang Wildlife Sanctuary. Locally this species is referred as *nal dura* (Assamese, *nal* = reed, *dura* = hardshell turtle). As part of the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehra Dun and US Fish and Wildlife Service Collaborative Project on Turtles and Tortoises, a survey was conducted in Kaziranga National Park, Assam, during the last week of March 1992.

Intensive survey was carried out for two days (i.e. March 25-26, 1992) in and around *Pubmetakani beel*, *Azgar camp*, Kokhra Range in Kaziranga National Park. Eighteen specimens of *Geoclemys hamiltonii* were collected of which nine were alive, eight shells and one freshly dead turtle. The sex was identified by the concavity of the plastron and long tail with thick base in male and absence of plastral concavity in female.

The largest specimen recorded was a male having a straight line carapace length (SCL) of 39 cm and carapace width (CW) of 22.5 cm. Among 18 individuals recorded 10 were males and 8 females (1:0.8). This indicates a balanced or slightly male biased sex ratio in the wild for *Geoclemys hamiltonii*.

Mean biometrics of 8 live specimens collected on the survey is given in Table 1. The size records show that both sexes attain equal size or males may be slightly larger.

One freshly dead turtle was obtained from *Pubmetakani beel* and cut open to examine reproductive status. This specimen was a female and measured 32 cm in SCL and had two sets of eggs. One set had twenty six well developed ellipsoidal white eggs. Ten of them measured an average of 43.5 mm (range 41-45 mm) in length, 26.0 mm (25-27 mm) in width and weighed 18.0 gm. Based on the size, shape, weight and texture of the egg shell we presume that these eggs were well developed and ready to be laid within a fortnight.

The other set of 36 eggs, all white in colour and round in shape measuring 10-20 mm were